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I.

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*History of a Polypous Excrescence  
in the Vagina, attended with un-  
usually severe Symptoms.*

By D. H. BARD, M.D.

On the 17th of February, 1829, I was called to see Mrs. B—— G——, of Potton, Lower Canada, aged 33, the mother of eleven children; the youngest of whom was six months old. She was rather tall, of a dark complexion, and naturally possessed a good constitution. The history that she gave me of her case was this:—She had generally enjoyed good health; her labors had been easy, and she had recovered from the effects of them in a short time, until the last (in August preceding); since which she had not been well. Upon the cessation of the lochial discharge, an excessive leucorrhœa supervened, interrupted by occasional discharges of blood from the vagina: at times these discharges were so great as to bring on extreme weakness, and confine the patient to her bed for some days. There had been much pain in the region of the uterus, of a dull, heavy, expulsive kind; and for a short time past, there had been an unnatural degree of fulness in the upper part of the vagina. Recently, she had had an attack of hemorrhage from the uterus, and she was then unable

to sit up, in consequence of the debility produced by it. Her bowels had been tolerably regular; appetite moderately good; and her sleep comfortable. She at this time presented the appearance of a patient exhausted by leuco-phlegmatic discharges, and her digestive organs were evidently somewhat deranged: her face was pale; she had a gnawing, faint distress at the stomach; her tongue was pale and glabrous; pulse feeble, but not unusually frequent; appetite indifferent, and bowels rather slow. She had pain in the back and loins, and a dull uneasy sensation in the pelvis.

On making an examination per vaginam, I found a polypous concretion attached to the upper and anterior portion of the vagina, a little inclined to the right side. Its attachment commenced at that portion of the vaginal cord which is reflected over the neck of the uterus, and extended downward about half way to the meatus urinaris; its neck was short and thick, and its body flattish, projecting about a finger's breadth beyond the neck on all sides round; it had a soft granulous feel, resembling a placenta enveloped in its membranes, from which it would have been difficult for the touch to have distinguished it, though it was rather firmer than a healthy placenta: blood oozed out of it on handling. The patient thought there was an

obscure sense of feeling in it when touched ; but it was difficult to tell whether this sensation was in the excrescence itself, or was communicated by percussion to the part from which it took its origin, or those with which it came in contact. The os uteri was in its usual place, its edges thickened, inflamed, and hard. The uterus was in situ naturale, and was distinctly felt between the fingers of one hand in the vagina, and the other on the abdomen. I should think it was not enlarged.

I informed the patient of the nature of the case ; that the foundation of her difficulties was the diseased structure in the vagina, and that no plan of general treatment would be successful until that was removed ; that it was possible something might be done by astringent and stimulating applications to the part, but that the ligature afforded the most probable chance of success. The former mode, being most congenial to the patient's feelings and those of her friends, as well as my own present views of the case, was adopted. Injections of an astringent and stimulating nature, as sulphate of zinc, acetate of lead, sanguinaria canadensis, &c., were directed to be thrown into the vagina, and such general and constitutional means as appeared to be indicated were resorted to.

At the end of four weeks there had been no hemorrhage, and the patient's strength was improved : she could walk a few steps, had a good appetite, slept well, and her bowels were regular ; but it was evident the constitution was laboring under a heavy burden, or that it had been too largely drawn upon, readily to regain its former health and firmness. The surface was

pale ; the tongue pale, smooth, and shining ; there was debility of the digestive organs, and every function seemed suffering from want of energy and freedom of action. There was a dull, heavy, uneasy sensation in the pelvis, and a constant discharge of a whitish fœtid fluid from the vagina. The polypus had increased in size, so as now to distend the vagina some ; the diameter of the neck increasing in the same proportion as the body. I now, as I had before done, urged the removal of the polypus by ligature. To this the patient's friends were opposed, and she would not submit. I was therefore forced to abandon the object.

On the 2d of April, I was called in haste to visit her, the messenger informing me that it was doubtful whether she lived till I arrived. On reaching the patient's house, I learned that for four or five days past she had had more pain in the region of the uterus ; some sanguineous discharge from the vagina ; her appetite had failed ; she had a slight diarrhœa, and her strength had departed rapidly. This morning the uterine pain, attended with a strong expulsive effort like that of labor, became severe ; large coagula of blood soon appeared, which the patient removed from the vagina with her hands ; and these were soon followed by profuse hemorrhage, which continued without intermission until the patient, exhausted and bloodless, fell into deep faintings and was supposed to be dying. Cold had been applied to the abdomen and genitals, and astringents had been given internally. When I saw her, the hemorrhage had ceased ; her pulse were just perceptible at the wrist ; voice sunk to a whisper ; face and lips bleached ; extremities cold ;

very faint, but quiet.—Tr. Opii et Ol. Cinnamom. were given in suitable quantities, and beef-tea with bread, directed for food. She passed a tolerably comfortable night, and began immediately to improve, and continued to do so until April 9th, when she had another similar attack of flooding, which was again stopped by deep fainting.

On the 10th, I made an examination per vaginam. The excrescence had increased in size rapidly since the last examination. The longitudinal diameter of its neck was much increased, extending from within one half or three-fourths of an inch of the orifice of the urethra, up the vagina as far as the examination could be continued,—probably to the point where it was found attached on the first examination. The transverse diameter was equal to one-fourth the circumference of the vagina, and its body occupied nearly the whole recto-vaginal cavity, pressing the rectum backward, and resting on the perineum. The body of the polypus was divided by deep fissures into distinct lobes ;—whether these fissures extended to its base, was not ascertained. The texture was nearly the same as it was when first examined, though the granulated feel was not so evident. I now requested a consultation, and Dr. S. S. Butter, of East Berkshire, was called.

April 11th.—Saw her with Dr. Butter. She appeared rather improved ; strength gaining ; appetite good ; bowels free. There has been no hemorrhage since the 9th ; but the discharge mentioned before still continues in great quantities. There are wandering pains in the head, back, limbs, abdomen, etc. : the emaciation is not great, but the

muscles are flabby and the skin pale ; pulse about 100 ; tongue the same as it ever has been, smooth, pale, and shining. The case presented the aspect of utter hopelessness. Still it was thought best not to look idly on ; and after an attentive consideration of it in all its bearings, we came to the following conclusions :—That, unless this diseased structure can be removed, the patient cannot long survive ;—that, although all operations of this kind are attended with more or less danger, yet in this case there is little to be apprehended ; and that the enclosure of the polypus in a ligature may, by preventing hemorrhage, prolong (if it does no more) the patient's life ;—that, if no more than half can be enclosed in a ligature, the removal of this portion may destroy the organic life of the remainder, and it may be removed spontaneously, or it can be removed by another operation.—Our opinion being communicated to the patient and her friends, they acquiesced.

12th.—Had a bad night ; some slight hemorrhage ; pain and sense of heat in the pelvis, back, and loins ; pulse small and quick ; much exhausted and restless. After a large dose of Tr. Opii had been given, the patient was laid upon the edge of a firm seat, her head and shoulders being raised and supported by an assistant, and her legs flexed and separated as far as convenient. As the tumor filled the vagina, it was necessary to dilate the external parts somewhat ;—this being done, a canula, containing a firm waxed linen ligature, was introduced into the posterior part of the vagina, between the polypus and the rectum, and retained there. The bow of the ligature, which was left large, was then thrown over the anterior and

inferior portions of the tumor, and pushed upon all sides round, until it passed over its projecting edge, as far up as it could be reached. The ligature then passed over the body of the polypus to the point of the canula, and being properly adjusted, was gradually tightened. Near the pubis, where it is mentioned the neck of the tumor approaches near the orifice of the urethra, when the ligature was tightened, that portion of the vagina which gave origin to this part was put upon the stretch, and the patient complained of some pain and tightness across the lower part of the abdomen;—this, however, soon subsided, and she was put into bed more comfortable than was anticipated. A cloth wet with diluted alcohol was applied to the genitals, and she was directed to take a little wine through the afternoon.

13th.—Morning. Rested very well last night: more strength to-day; no pain or soreness about the genitals. She was now ordered to take bark and wine, in such quantities as the stomach would bear, to use a nutritious diet, and keep the bowels free. The ligature was tightened a very little to-day without inconvenience.

For the three first days she appeared to be improving; her strength and appetite were better, and she suffered no inconvenience from the ligature, though it occasioned pain if much force was used in tightening it. During this time, I found that when the force was so applied to the ligature that it acted on the posterior part of the polypus only, it gave no uneasiness, even when I exerted all the force I thought prudent. But when it was so applied as to act equally on each part of the

circumference of that portion of the excrescence included in it, she complained of pain like that mentioned when the ligature was first applied, although the degree of force exerted was small. To this, and the bulk of the tumor, was probably owing the tardy progress made by the ligature, and the length of time it occupied in effecting its object.

On the evening of the 15th, from the ligature having been too tightly drawn that day, there came on pain in the lower belly, back, loins, and shooting down the thigh, headach, and some preternatural heat. These symptoms were soon removed by loosening the ligature, applying cold to the abdomen and genitals, and opening the bowels; and though she did not appear so well as during the first three days, yet she was comfortable on the 17th, and continued so until the 21st, when the ligature came away, and with it about one half the polypus.

On examining the vagina, I found the lower portion of it free, the upper part filled with the remaining portion of the polypus, which felt lax and softer, and seemed to have lost its vital forces. That portion of the vaginal coat from which the excrescence had been removed, was thickened, irregular, and a little tender. She did not complain of soreness anywhere else. The patient was encouraged, and appeared rather improved; it was evident, however, that recovery would not take place. The whole surface was deadly pale; her eyes were heavy and sunken; tongue pale and smooth; abdomen rather full; bowels slow; nutrition imperfect; and occasional wandering pains in different parts.

A course of treatment having for its object the restoration of the digestive functions, and recruiting the strength and energy of the whole system, was instituted. A weak solution of soap to be injected into the vagina while any soreness remains, and then an infusion of *Sanguinaria Canadensis*, of such strength as the parts will bear.

After this time she failed gradually: the discharges from the vagina were larger in quantity, of a light whey color, occasionally intermixed with grumous blood, and so fetid that the atmosphere of the patient's house was hardly tolerable. The polypous concretion diminished in size gradually: on the 10th of June, when the last examination was made, it was not one-fourth as large as when the ligature was removed, and the bulk of what remained was rapidly lessening. At the same time her strength was failing, though indeed she had not much to lose: the deranged state of the digestive organs was increasing, and the fugitive pains before mentioned grew more distressing and exhausted her much. I made a note on the 19th of May, which states that she is very feeble; has vomited several times a day for a week past; a two-grain pill, composed of equal parts calomel and soap, that she has taken daily for a few days past, has purged her much; there is a little taste in the mouth; no appetite; "trembling," as she expresses it, "at the stomach;" skin hot, but pallid; acute, and almost intolerable pain, generally about the abdomen, sometimes in the chest, and at others in the limbs: this pain is not constant, and after one organ has suffered a few hours, it

will remit and soon appear again in another place. Every day, for some days past, she has had a paroxysm of fever;—pulse small and frequent; tongue the same as it ever has been; emaciation great. An emetic of ipecacuanha relieved the vomiting, and the heat for a time was less; but she had occasional and distressing paroxysms of heat as long as she lived, and a diarrhoea came on which resisted all treatment.

On the 7th of June, she was suddenly seized with severe pain in, and great swelling of, the right inferior extremity, from the toes to the labium pudendi. I saw her soon after the pain and swelling commenced. The pulse, tongue, and skin, were the same as they had been; no pain in any other part, except the swelled limb, which was more than twice its natural size, pale, glabrous, œdematous, and cool; the pain was excessively sharp: there was no discoloration, nor any irregular hardness whatever, but the limb presented a perfectly smooth and equal surface. The swelling of this leg was sudden;—according to the nurse's account, it was not an hour from the time it commenced before it had reached its extent;—it should be remarked, however, that there had been a bloated œdematous state of the feet and ankles for a long time.

Blisters applied to the points about which the pain centred, and frictions with anodyne and camphorated oil, relieved the pain in the leg, or rendered it from time to time tolerable; but the swelling never subsided.

In this condition,—wasted by a constant and uncontrollable diarrhoea; racked with pain that nothing would but for a short time

assuage; destitute almost entirely of muscular strength; parched, a great part of the time, with unquenchable thirst, and tormented with an excessive heat of surface, which came on in irregular paroxysms; without appetite, and taking but very little food, a little wine, and an occasional dose of opium,—life lingered on, in a mere breathing skeleton, till the 9th of July.

An examination post-mortem could not be obtained.

Query,—did the local disease, in this case, exert any *specific* effect upon the constitution?—if so, what was its nature?

North Troy, Vt., August, 1829.

## II.

### CRAMP OF THE STOMACH.

The following summary of a paper in the Glasgow Medical and Surgical Journal, is extracted from the Medical Gazette. The observations were original with John Macfarlane, M.D., of the former city, and since they are the result of his experience, may enlighten the views and serve, perhaps, to direct the practice of others.

SPASM of the stomach, although often sudden in its attack, urgent in its symptoms, and alarming in its appearance, has been either altogether overlooked by the majority of authors, or noticed only in the most cursory manner, as an occasional attendant on dyspepsia. It is, however, an important, frequently-occurring, dangerous, and sometimes fatal variety of stomachic disease. Its symptoms are in general well-marked and diagnostic. The treatment requires to be prompt, powerful, and peculiar; and al-

though in several cases it may be connected with a previously existing derangement in the functions of the affected organ, yet in others, and these by no means rare, it originates suddenly from distant irritation, or without any previous morbid indication.

When spasm affects the stomach there is the most acute pain, with a feeling of rigid contraction, violent twisting or tearing in the epigastrium, soon followed by painful and interrupted breathing, difficult articulation, pallid countenance, small, hurried, and contracted pulse, and occasionally with coldness of the extremities and rigid contraction of the recti abdominis and gastrocnemii muscles.

In severe forms of the disease, the patient usually complains of a sensation of rigid contraction or drawing together in the epigastric region, occasioned by the inordinate contraction of the muscular coat of the stomach, and occasionally producing a hard circumscribed tumor perceptible to touch. When, however, the abdominal muscles participate in the spasm, the tension and inequality of surface produced by the morbid contraction of the recti abdominis, effectually prevent the discovery of this tumor. The diaphragm, it is presumed, very soon sympathizes with this state of the stomach, and becomes also spasmodically affected, as the short, interrupted, and highly-distressed respiration, and the difficult articulation, evidently show. Indeed, every person who has seen a violent attack of this complaint, must have observed the change in the respiration which takes place at the height of the paroxysm; the difficulty, and often the impossibili-

ty, of performing inspiration and expiration even in an obstructed manner, and the half-suppressed cries or moans which the patient utters, apparently occasioned by the rigidly contracted diaphragm, remaining as an almost immoveable partition between the thorax and abdomen. If the hand is applied either to the thorax or epigastrium, we can seldom discover the alternate elevations and depressions of these parts indicative of a natural state of breathing.

With respect to the causes of the disease, the author has seen several instances where it was produced by great mental anxiety. In some cases, where a strong disgust or antipathy exists to certain dietetic articles, any attempt to eat them, or even simply naming them to the patient, has been followed by severe spasmodic affections of the stomach. But the cases are, however, far more numerous in which the disease is produced, not through the influence of the imagination, but from the introduction into the stomach of some substance, which, from peculiar idiosyncrasy, acts on this organ as a morbid irritant. In addition to these exciting causes may be ranked, sudden exposure to cold, drinking cold liquids while the body is heated, coldness of the lower extremities, intemperance, &c.

"Females are more subject to this disease than males, in the proportion of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 1. Accordingly, of 36 cases which I have seen, 26 occurred in females and 10 in males; and in 12 of these, no affection of the stomach, or other predisposing cause, could be discovered.—Irritation in the uterus is also said to be a frequent cause of spasm of the stomach.

Cullen says, that 'the ordinary flow of the menstrual discharge retarded, or totally suppressed, affects the stomach, and disposes it to be affected more readily with spasm.'"

When long continued, spasm of the stomach is apt to induce inflammation of this organ. The occurrence of violent hæmatemesis during a paroxysm of spasm of the stomach, probably occasioned by a partial laceration of the internal coat of that viscus, is illustrated by a case,—in which the patient recovered.

An interesting case is related where death took place in little more than an hour from the commencement of the spasm, and where, although the body was not allowed to be examined, the author thinks the fatal event was produced by laceration of the stomach from the violence of the spasms.

In another instance, where the symptoms were well marked, and the history of which is given, a lacerated opening was found in the stomach on dissection, without the slightest vestige of organic disease, of gangrene, erosion, or ulceration.

The disease may prove fatal without inducing any lesion of the stomach, and an instance of this kind is detailed, where, on dissection, the only morbid appearance that could be discovered by the most accurate investigation, was general softening of the cerebellum, with vascular turgescence in the base of the brain.

In the treatment of spasm of the stomach, where we find it occurring in individuals whose general health has been impaired by confinement or sedentary employments, or who have suffered



from anxiety, fatigue, or exhaustion, and who are free from stomachic ailments, the author has found the paroxysms frequently subdued by a drachm of sulphuric ether with 50 drops of laudanum, its good effects being sometimes instantaneous; while in other cases the dose required to be repeated two, three, or even four times, before relaxation of the spasm was effected. In a few other cases the same decisive results were obtained, although the medicine was speedily rejected by vomiting. "On one occasion, (says the author,) when I was about to operate on a woman for strangulated hernia, the husband, a stout robust man, on account of anxiety for his wife, was suddenly seized with nausea and slight vomiting, followed by excruciating pain in the region of the stomach, and the other symptoms of violent spasm. A bladder containing pounded ice, which had been applied to the hernia, was laid over the epigastrium, and with the happiest effects, for in less than five minutes the pain was removed. This application is much recommended by M. Barras in neuralgia of the stomach; but I have had no other opportunity of trying its efficacy." When the attack is produced by the introduction into the stomach of some morbid irritant, the speediest relief will be obtained by the exhibition of an emetic.

"I have in two cases seen the most marked advantage from venesection; and that when, from the aspect of the patients, the cold clammy state of the skin, and the feebleness of the pulse, the reverse of this treatment seemed to be indicated."

When the recurrence of this

disease is connected with functional derangement of the stomach, much benefit is found from small doses of quinine, but especially from the use of the subnitrate of bismuth. When the attack is excited by depraved intestinal secretions, or by constipation, which frequently happens, more benefit is to be derived from mild laxatives and alteratives, than from strong or drastic purges. The diet should, of course, be strictly attended to, and such articles selected as are light and of easy digestion; for when the stomach is much stimulated, either by the quantity or quality of the food, spasmodic excitement, more or less powerful, is not unfrequently produced.

### III.

#### TARTAR ON THE TEETH.

MANY hypotheses have been published respecting the nature and source of the earthy material which accumulates on the teeth, termed tartar.

Professor Berzelius, in a work on animal chemistry, says, when it first settles on the teeth it is mere hardened mucus, and that during its decomposition, phosphate of lime is produced, which adheres firmly to the enamel. M. Serres says that it is secreted by minute distinct glands, and not a deposit from the saliva. Professor Hertz, in his popular treatise, considers it a consolidated morbid secretion of relaxed or irritated gums; and many dentists attribute it to decomposition of animal and vegetable food lodged between the teeth. Mr. La Beaume has lately ascertained, by microscopical examination, that this collection is produced in the



same manner as coral, by animalculæ resembling the *medreposita oculata*. By means of a solar microscope of strong magnifying power, we have seen them in a very lively state; and, from the cellular organization of the tartar, we have no doubt of the correctness of Mr. La Beaume's theory. The same has been observed by Mr. Cooper, a scientific chemist and geologist of London. Mr. La Beaume is decidedly of opinion that, after the tartar, which, like coral, is a mere nidus, adheres firmly to the teeth, the animalculæ burrow into the teeth, and, by insinuating themselves between the teeth and gum, occasion disease in both; but the secretion from them is often so offensive as to contaminate the breath. Mr. La Beaume has made numerous experiments with different mineral, vegetable, and animal acid, and with alcohol, to ascertain their effects on the animalculæ and on their habitation, and it is a curious fact, that of all the articles he has employed, the true *vinegar* acid, (not the pyroligneous acid, which is now generally sold for it,) almost instantaneously killed the animalculæ, and acted powerfully in decomposing the concretions, so that they were easily removed by a brush. The more powerful acids, in the same state of dilution, and alcohol, seemed to have little effect on the animalculæ. In order to destroy the animalculæ and their eggs, and to decompose the production which protects them, Mr. La Beaume recommends the teeth to be brushed every morning with the *vinegar* acid, (*acidum aceticum verum*;) diluted with rose water, and immediately afterwards to make use of the levigated *areca* nut charcoal, as re-

commended by Professor Hertz, in his popular Treatise on the Management of the Teeth.

The use of the diluted acetic acid every morning will, in the course of a few days, entirely remove the tartar, and the regular employment of the *areca* charcoal and tincture of *rhatany* every, or every other, morning, will effectually prevent the generation of the animalculæ.

#### IV.

##### INFIDELITY OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

*Being Part of Dr. Allen's Address occasioned by the Death of Dr. Smith.*

You may be aware, that the charge of utter regardlessness of religion, and even of undisguised infidelity, is often brought against the medical profession. But it may be well doubted, whether physicians are peculiarly obnoxious to the disreputable charge. There have questionless been many infidel physicians; but there have been infidels, also, in other professions, and among other classes of men.

If, among our eminent physicians, there have been some unbelievers, there have also been conspicuous Christians; such were, in foreign countries, SYDENHAM, BOERHAAVE, and HALLER. Need I speak of RAMSAY, of South Carolina, the American historian, who was for many years a worthy member of a Congregational church, and who, although he fell by the hand of a maniac-assassin, yet died in the utmost tranquillity and serenity, relying on the mercy of God through the blood of the Redeemer?—Need I speak of REDMAN, of Philadelphia, eminent

for piety, and a faithful elder of the Presbyterian church? Much of his time at home was spent in reading pious books, and in the offices of devotion. Of death, and of the scenes which await the soul in the world of spirits, he was accustomed to converse with the utmost cheerfulness.—Need I speak of RIDGELY, of Delaware, a member of the Episcopal church, who was particularly attentive to the moral and religious education of his children, regarding merely intellectual culture, without the discipline of the passions and of the heart, without efforts to bring the youthful mind under the influence of virtue and piety, as only giving wings to the pestilence, or as putting power into hands which would employ it for purposes of evil. Hence it was, that he earnestly recommended to his children, and to all around him, the diligent study of the word of God.—Need I speak of the illustrious RUSH, who deemed riches and fame as incomparably less valuable than the religious principles which he received from his parents, and who was accustomed, at the close of every day, to read in his family a chapter of the Bible, and then to address God in prayer?—Need I speak of MON-

SON, the head of the Medical Society of Connecticut, religious in youth and religious in old age, who could be the spiritual teacher of his sinking patient, and was accustomed, at his bedside, to commend his departing soul to the mercy of God, and who himself died in the triumphs of Christian hope?—Need I speak of BOWEN, of Providence, who himself suffered for years an agonizing disease, but who found in the sublime doctrines and gracious promises of the gospel, the support and consolation which the sufferer can derive from no other source; and who passed through the fiery furnace to come out, as his friends are persuaded, like gold from the hands of the refiner,—dying with a humble, cheerful reliance on the blood of the Redeemer?—Or need I speak of our own MITCHELL, of Maine, whose departure from the earth was not through the lingering pains of the sick-bed, but sudden as the lightning-glance from heaven; and who, by his habitual ardent piety, by the manifestations of a heart at all times kindled by the truths and hopes of the gospel, seemed to be always ready to wing his flight to another and a better world?

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BOSTON, TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 1829.

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#### MEDICAL PROSECUTIONS.

THE following case appears to be one of considerable interest to the profession in this country, as well as abroad.—Mr. Van Butchell, a surgeon in London, performed an operation, probably for stricture of the rectum, though this is not stated.

The patient, however, died; and on examination, the intestine was found to have received considerable injury. Mr. Van B. was tried for manslaughter, but acquitted. The following is a part of Mr. Baron Hullock's charge to the jury:—

“If such an indictment could be

supported, in the total absence of all evidence of want of skill or neglect, because an operation failed, the consequences would be most serious, whether the operation was performed by a regular or an irregular surgeon; and surely it would be most unjust to prosecute a man who might be a skilful and clever practitioner, upon the unsuccessful result of a dangerous operation, because he was not licensed, and not fortunate enough to possess the sanction and authority of a certain body in this town. If such a doctrine could be maintained, very many persons in remote parts would be unable to procure any assistance; for who would exercise their best skill, of whatever quality it might be, if in the case of failure they were to be subjected to an indictment for murder or manslaughter? It was somewhat remarkable that there was not a single decision on the point, which must show that all the most eminent lawyers had strong doubts of the propriety of such prosecutions, and that it was their uniform opinion. They were not for the first time to be told that operations would fail; but it was too much to say that, because they failed, the parties were to be subjected to a prosecution. What had been quoted from Blackstone was, in fact, a copy of what Lord Hale had said of cases of this description; but the words of his lordship would not bear a construction unfavorable to the person accused; it went to a direct and opposite tendency. The words of his lordship were, 'If a physician gives a person a potion without any intent of doing him any bodily hurt, but with an intent to cure or prevent a disease, and, contrary to the expectation of the physician, it kills him, this is no homicide; and the like of a surgeon; and I hold that opinion to be erroneous, that thinketh if he be no licensed chirurgeon or physician that occasioneth this mischance, that then it is felony; for physic and salves were before licensed physicians and

chirurgeons, and therefore, if they be not licensed according to the statutes of King Henry VIII., they are subject to the penalties in those statutes; but God forbid that any mischance of this kind should make any person not licensed, guilty of murder or manslaughter.' Cases might and did occur, where the parties recovered damages in a civil action for unskilful conduct; but God forbid that any person, under such circumstances, should be subjected to an indictment for murder or manslaughter; for, in that case, many would die for want of help, the helpers well knowing that, if they failed, they would be liable to such an indictment."

The justice of these remarks is almost self-evident; but it appears to us that the same general principles of equity which protect physicians in indictments in such cases, ought to be their safeguard, also, in civil suits, brought by the party who was the subject of treatment, or by his friends, when that treatment has been unsuccessful, or the practitioner has deceived himself in the diagnosis of a disease. Of this species of trial we have had some examples in this country; and they ought to be most strongly discountenanced, both within and without the limits of the profession. As an example of the ground on which such prosecutions have been instituted, we will suppose the following case:—An individual of respectable talents and with a good medical education, heroically devotes himself to the arduous and unthankful duties of a country practice. Extending his labors over an undefined and almost unlimited territory, he drives and is driven from house to house, from village to vil-

lage, by day and by night, from year's end to year's end, and is grudgingly rewarded in return with a bare subsistence for himself and his family. In the mean time, he sees scarce more practice in a month, than a practitioner in town can, with fair opportunities, witness in a day; knows little of the improvements taking place in his art; and hardly hears of, much less sees, a hospital. After proceeding in this manner for ten years,—time enough to rust out all the knowledge he ever possessed,—he is suddenly presented with a difficult surgical case, perhaps extremely obscure in its nature, and requiring a thorough knowledge of the state of parts for its treatment. Under these circumstances, he forms the best diagnosis in his power, and treats the case accordingly. The result proves that the diagnosis was incorrect, and the treatment injudicious; the patient is rendered a cripple for life, whereas if the case had been understood, he might have been restored to health and strength. In consequence, a suit is instituted against the physician, and the damages are laid at what the injured party might have earned, if in good health, over and above his probable earnings in his present state; for this, if anything, is the amount of injury inflicted. If claims like this were once admitted, what would be the consequence? Not, certainly, that physicians would become wiser or better informed than at present; but that, in emergencies such as we have mentioned, they would refuse to act at all, rather than incur a responsibility so dangerous. We have adopted

a particular statement of facts in the above supposition, because similar facts are known to have happened within no long interval of time. The principle, however, applies equally to surgical operations which have been unskillfully performed and followed by death. The idea of making the physician responsible, either in his property or his person, for the event of his well-meant endeavors to save the life of his patient, is perfectly barbarous, and wholly unworthy of a civilized people.

But it may be said, that although the regularly educated and licensed practitioner should be exempted from this responsibility, such protection is not due to the ignorant charlatan who poisons with his drugs, or to the untaught operator who murders with his knife. But as the principle avowed by Lord Hale, goes to the extent of protecting these, also, in their persons, it is not easy to see how justice can refuse them the same privilege in regard to their property. It is still the *quo animo*, the intention of the party, which forms the distinction between crime and innocence, between benevolence and malice. He who employs a physician knowing him to be ignorant, or even not knowing him to be learned, since those who have received a regular education can always procure credentials to that effect, does it at his own risk, and ought to be responsible for the consequences.

Another circumstance, too, ought not to pass unnoticed, as it goes very pointedly to discountenance medical prosecutions and suits for malpractice. It is the extreme difficulty,—

the impossibility in some cases,—of deciding, even in a court of law, what malpraxis is; whether an operation has been done well or ill; whether the unfortunate result is to be attributed to the bad conduct of the knife, or the injudicious administration of the drug. This difficulty has its foundation in the uncertainty of the healing art; and as this uncertainty must, in the nature of things, always exist, there can be no hope that the difficulty will ever be removed. Scarce a trial is on record which does not show it in strong relief. Take, for example, the last of which we have any account. It occurred at Troy, in the State of New-York.—A medical gentleman, by name M'Lellap, was prosecuted for malpractice as a surgeon; he having employed *permanent extension* of the limb in a case of fracture, whereas the patient, being crippled, imagined it owing entirely to the method pursued by this medical attendant. *Friends* were not wanting to urge the correctness of this notion, and assure him "that a *fixed position* of the knee joint was the best, and only safe and proper position of the limb, in cases of this kind."—At the trial, three of the profession testified that the mode of treatment adopted in the case was erroneous, and productive of injury to the patient; and three others made a statement precisely the reverse. A week was occupied in the proceedings, and the result was, a verdict of six cents for the defendant.

It is the duty of the profession to prevent, if possible, occurrences so degrading to their character; and

this can only be accomplished by their uniform determination, when called upon in doubtful cases, to give the most favorable views of the conduct of each other. Unless the circumstances of the case are fully known, and show that the practitioner acted in defiance of all authority, another physician is not bound in duty to condemn his proceeding; and he who does so, seems to us neither to consult the dignity of the body to which he belongs, nor his own eventual interest.

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NEW MODE OF OBTAINING THE SULPHATE OF QUININE.

THE following mode of preparing this valuable medicine, lately proposed by M. Cassola, seems to be far less expensive and troublesome than the one usually employed.

Two pounds of powdered yellow bark are boiled, for a quarter of an hour, in a pint of water, in which one ounce and a half of caustic potash has been dissolved. The decoction is filtered and expressed, and water poured on the remainder as long as it is colored by it. The residuum is now boiled for twenty minutes in twelve pints of water, to which an ounce of sulphuric acid has been added; the decoction is filtered and washed as before, and the remainder boiled in the same quantity of water, with a drachm of sulphuric acid. The acidulated decoctions are now mixed, and powdered chalk added to them, in order to saturate the excess of acid, and to precipitate the coloring matter; the fluid is filtered, and a sufficient quantity of subcarbonate of potash added to it; the precipitate is collected, washed, and boiled, in six times its weight of alcohol, at 40 deg.; the decoction being filtered and evaporated to one-third, five times the quantity of water is added to the rest, and all the alco-

hol driven off by a gentle heat. The quinine is now saturated with a few drops of sulphuric acid, by the admixture of which the fluid becomes perfectly clear, and is filtered almost in a boiling state, after a small quantity of chalk has been added. As soon as the fluid cools, the sulphate of quinine is deposited in white acicular crystals.—*Gazette de Santé.*

*New Mode of administering Quinine.*—Four cases of facial neuralgia, which resisted the ordinary treatment, yielded to the administration of one grain of powdered quinine, in two grains of snuff, mixed and used as common snuff. This dose was always sufficient, and in from two to three days the patients were cured, as if by enchantment. The cases occurred to Dr. Richet, of Metz, and are related in his thesis presented to the Faculty of Medicine of Strasbourg.

*Dropsy of the Pericardium.*—The London Medical and Physical Journal for May last, contains an account of a case of dropsy of the pericardium, by F. W. Wood, Esq., in which the pericardium contained *two quarts* of a perfectly limpid fluid. We may mention, also, that "the outer coat of the pericardium had a thin shining appearance, whilst on the inside were deposited layers of coagulable lymph resembling the rugæ on the stomach of the cow. The heart was also covered with a similar deposit; its parietes were much thickened, and it appeared as if fore-shortened, the apex being pressed upwards. In the left ventricle was a portion of coagulable lymph, of a yellow sizy appearance, of nearly an ounce weight. The carneæ columnæ were much enlarged; the valves free from any apparent disease. The structure of the lungs was perfectly unimpaired."

*Singular Treatment of Tetanus.*—The following extraordinary practice for the cure of this disease, prevails amongst the inhabitants of the

Tonga or Friendly Islands, in the South Pacific Ocean; among whom, it is said, that traumatic tetanus prevails to a great extent.—It consists in producing a considerable degree of irritation in the urethra, and discharge of blood, by the introduction of a reed of proper size, for some distance into the canal; and, when the case is very violent, a cord is passed along the urethra, and carried through the perineum. The two ends are then occasionally pulled to and fro, inducing great pain and a copious hemorrhage, with much swelling and inflammation of the penis. Two cures of confirmed tetanus are related by a gentleman of the name of Mariner, to Professor Chapman, of Pennsylvania, as having been performed by this strange and unpromising practice. The mode may suggest a principle capable of improvement.—*Lancet.*

*Mesmerism.*—Amongst the stories which are reviving in Paris, in consequence of the operation which we lately mentioned as having been performed by M. Cloquet on a female, while supposed to be in a state of insensibility from "magnetic influence," is one of a madman, who, some years ago, it is alleged, requested and suffered another madman to cut off his head. The operator proceeded slowly, with a very bad knife, but the patient submitted quietly, and without uttering a cry.—Another story is, that a female, who was in the Salpêtrière two years since, used to devour her own flesh until every part of the body which she could get at was terribly mutilated.—A third account is given of a female, named De Barre, who nailed herself to a cross, and remained there an hour, "with a tranquil air, her eyes frequently closed, speaking first to one, then to another, and saying that it was very pleasant." But, generally speaking, the French are very sceptical as to M. Cloquet's case. There is, however, an official

discussion now proceeding, which will undoubtedly produce the same result as the commission which was appointed in the better days of animal magnetism in London.

By far the most interesting of the cases which have yet occurred in the practice of animal magnetizers, are those in which the patients have been females, and pregnancy one of the results. This curious effect, at one time, made magnetizing a highly popular operation.—*Id.*

**Conceptions.**—In a memoir on the influence of the seasons, climates, periods of labor and repose, abundance or scarcity of provisions, and social habits, on the number of conceptions in women, M. Villermé states as one of his conclusions, that the six months of the year in which there are the most births, occur in the following order:—February, March, January, April, November, September. These refer the conceptions to the months of May, June, April, July, February, and March. He regards the same agent which produces marsh miasm, as amongst the greatest obstacles connected with climate, (and therefore, indeed, with season,) to fertility. In the year 1817, one of great scarcity of provisions in the eastern part of France, a diminution of the number of conceptions by one half of the ordinary number, was a very marked result.

**Bleeding from Leech-bites.**—Many remedies have been made public. Dr. Löwenhardt, of Berlin, adds another, which he mentions as being successful and simple: it is that of drawing the edges of the wound together with a fine needle and thread; the thread being passed through the cuticle only, no pain is occasioned, and the bleeding is at once suppressed.

**Iodine in Gout.**—This medicine has been repeatedly employed with success in gout, by M. Gendrin, the Editor of the *Journ. Gén. de Méd.* He applies it externally and internal-

ly in frictions, vapor, tinctures, alkaline solution, and enema. He has tried it in about thirty cases, and in every one of them the patients were either cured in a few days, or their condition rapidly ameliorated. In no instance has he found it productive of injurious effects.

**Dressers.**—In all the Italian hospitals there are a number of young men, from 20 to 30, who perform almost the same functions as the dressers in the London hospitals, but live in the institution, and are lodged and fed at the expense of government. They receive about *three shillings a month* salary.

Connected with this process in the above hospitals, is a peculiar method of using adhesive straps.—The strap is cut very broad at the extremities, and narrow in the centre, so that it is enabled to take a firm hold of the edges of the wound, and exert a considerable power in retaining them in contact; while large spaces are left between each slip in the middle, which permits the free discharge of the pus and ligatures.—*Med. and Phys. Journal.*

**The Sun-flower.**—It is said the seeds of the common sunflower will yield from 5 to 7 quarts of oil to the bushel; and that this oil is equal to that prepared from olives as a condiment, to sperm oil in elamping, and to linseed oil in painting. The stocks are a good substitute for hemp in manufacturing pack-thread, and the young flower-cups are not inferior to the artichoke as an article of diet.

**SKETCHES.**—Our foreign journals arrived too late to be of use in this number of the Journal.

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#### REPORT OF DEATHS IN BOSTON,

The week ending August 14, at noon.

Of canker, 1—canker in the bowels, 2—consumption, 6—convulsions, 2—childbed, 1—dysentery, 2—hooping-cough, 1—measles, 2—mortification, 2—typhous fever, 1. Males, 12—females, 9. Total, 21.



## ADVERTISEMENTS.

## MEDICAL INSTRUCTION.

**A** COURSE of Private Instruction, for the education of Medical Students, will begin on the 1st of September next, under the direction of the subscribers. The students will be regularly examined and instructed. They will have an opportunity of attending the Medical and Surgical practice and operations in the Massachusetts General Hospital; and Clinical Lectures will be given to them occasionally.

Further information on the subject may be obtained by application to either of the subscribers.

JOHN C. WARREN,  
GEO. HAYWARD,  
ENOCH HALE, JR.

Boston, Aug. 17, 1829. aug25—3t.

## MEMOIRS OF DR. GOOD.

**J**UST published and for sale by CARTER & HENDEE, Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character, Literary, Professional, and Religious, of the late JOHN MASON GOOD, M.D. F.R.S. F.R.S.L. Mem. Am. Phil. Soc. and F.L.S. of Philadelphia, &c. &c. &c. By OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D. Aug. 11.

## NEW LONDON WORK.

**J**UST received, by CARTER & HENDEE, corner of Washington and School streets, A Chemical Catechism; in which the Elements of Chemistry, with the recent discoveries in the Science, are clearly and fully explained. Illustrated by Notes, Engravings and Tables, and containing an Appendix of select Experiments, &c. By THOMAS GRAHAM, M.D. Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, &c. &c.

C. & H. have also just received, Elements of Chemistry. By ANDREW FYFE, M.D. F.R.S.E.

## CONSOLIDATED COPAIVA.

**"C**OPAIVA may be given in this form without the least inconvenience. Neither communicating taste, nor imparting odor to the breath, it is also retained without the least disquietude or uneasiness to the stomach; and I am informed

by Dr. Rosseau, that in large doses it does not purge."—*Phil. Journal of Med. Sciences.*

See an article in this Journal, Aug. 18th.

## OIL OF BLACK PEPPER.

This is a much more active preparation of Piperine. One drop is fully equal to six grains of the latter. It is a valuable adjunct to Quinine. One or two drops, added to six grains, will greatly increase the efficacy of that medicine.

For sale by NATHAN JARVIS, 188 Washington Street, where Physicians will find medicines at as reasonable terms as at any place in Boston.

Aug. 25.

coptf.

## MEMOIR OF DR. HOLYOKE.

**J**UST published, and for sale by CARTER & HENDEE,—A Memoir of EDWARD A. HOLYOKE, M.D. LL.D., prepared in compliance with a vote of the Essex South District Medical Society.

Carter & Hendee have just received the American Journal of the Medical Sciences, No 8, August, 1829.—C. & H. receive subscriptions for this valuable work, and can supply the numbers from its commencement. Aug. 18.

## BERKSHIRE MEDICAL INSTITUTION.

**T**HE Annual Course of LECTURES will commence on the first Thursday in September, and continue fifteen weeks.

Theory and Practice of Physic by H. H. CHILDS, M.D.

Anatomy and Physiology, J. D. WELLS, M.D.

Medical Jurisprudence, S. W. WILLIAMS, M.D.

Theoretical and Operative Surgery, S. WHITE, M.D. and S. P. WHITE, M.D.

Materia Medica, Pharmacy and Obstetrics, C. B. COVENTRY, M.D.

Chemistry, Botany, Mineralogy and Natural Philosophy, C. DEWY, M.D.

Matriculation ticket, \$3. Fee for Lectures, \$40. Library ticket, \$1. Graduation, \$15.50. Board, including washing, lodging and room, \$1.75 a week.

Pittsfield, July 22, 1829. aug4tsept30

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